1: Leitner L-3 (1866-93) 1893? AV3 Dard AV3

2nd Verse.

Watàn dárv zár | *Tu mashahúre billé* | *Ash* 539
In my country famous | You famous have become | To-day
bajóni dégi bárri musafiri | *Zari mójo*
to get you prepared on a great journey | Openly me
lai langtíddi=tje | *Djtll mey hawallt* | *Stn qattda*
much pains | My soul is in your keeping | The river
phúne | *Sudà chogarong*
is flowing, the large flower | Of silver colour.*

A PRAYER OF THE BASHGELI KAFIRS.

[*In the Kalásha dialect.*]

The ideas and many of the words in this prayer were evidently acquired by my two Kafirs on their way through Kashmir:

"Khudá, tandrusti dé, prushkári rozì de, abattì kari, dewalat man. Tu ghóna asas, tshik intara, tshik tu faidá káy asas. Sat asmán tì, Stru suri mastruk mótshe dé."

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

A. AMUSEMENTS.

The Chaughan Bazi or Hockey on horseback, so popular 536
everywhere north of Kashmir, and which is called Polo by the Baltis and Ladakis, who both play it to perfection and in a manner which I shall describe elsewhere, is also well known to the Ghilgiti and Astori subdivisions of the Shina people. On great general holidays as well as on any special occasion of rejoicing, the people meet on those grounds which are mostly near the larger villages, and pursue the game with great excitement and at the risk of casualties. The first day I was at Astor, I had the greatest difficulty in restoring to his senses a youth of the name of

* The beautiful songs of "My little darling ornaments will wear." "Corn is being distributed," "I will give pleasure's price," "My metal is hard," "Come out, oh daughter of the hawk," will be found on pages 2, 4, 10, 11, and 37, of this pamphlet respectively and need not therefore be quoted in this place.

1: Leitner L-3 (1868-93) 1893? AV3 Dard AV3
Burushō AV1

D 526 Rustem Ali who, like a famous player of the same name at Mardo, was passionately fond of the game, and had been thrown from his horse. The place of meeting near Astor is called the Eedgah. The game is called TOPE in Astor, and the grounds for playing it are called SHAJARAN. At [D 177] Gilgit the game is called BULÁ, and the place SHAWARAN. The latter names are evidently of Tibetan origin.

[B 526] The people are also very fond of target practice, shooting with bows, which they use dexterously but in which they D 224 do not excel the people of Nagyr and Hunza. Game is much stalked during the winter. At Astor any game shot on the three principal hills—*Tshhamô*, a high hill opposite the fort, *Demtdeldên* and *Tshólokot*—belong to the Nawab of Astor—the sportsman receiving only the head, legs and a haunch—or to his representative, then the Tahsildar Munshi Rozi Khan. At Gilgit everybody claims what he may have shot, but it is customary for the Nawab to receive some share of it. Men are especially appointed to watch and track game, and when they discover their whereabouts notice is sent to the villages from which parties issue, accompanied by musicians, and surround the game. Early in the morning, when the "Lóhe" dawns, the musicians begin to play and a great noise is made which frightens the game into the several directions where the sportsmen are placed.

D 411 The guns are matchlocks and are called in Gilgiti "*turmàk*" and in Astór "tumák." At Gilgit they manu- B 411 facture the guns themselves or receive them from Badakhshan. The balls have only a slight coating of lead, the inside generally being a little stone. The people of Hunza and Nagyr invariably place their guns on little wooden pegs which are permanently fixed to the gun and are called "Dugazá." The guns are much lighter than those manufactured elsewhere, much shorter and carry much smaller bullets than the matchlock of the Maharajah's troops. They carry very much farther than any native Indian gun and are fired with almost unerring accuracy. For "small shot"

1: Leitner L-3 (1866-93) 1693? AV3 Dard AV3
Burusho AV?

little stones of any shape—the longest and oval ones being preferred—are used. There is one kind of stone especially which is much used for that purpose; it is called "Balósh Batt," which is found in Hanza, Nagyr, Skardo, and near the "Demídeldèn" hill already noticed, at a village called Pareshinghi near Astor. It is a very soft stone and large cooking utensils are cut out from it, whence the name, "Balósh" Kettle, "Batt" stone, "Balósh Batt." The stone is cut out with a chisel and hammer; the former is called "Gútt" in Astori and "Gukk" in Gilgiti;" the hammer "toá" and "Totshúng" and in Gilgiti "sam-denn." The gunpowder is manufactured by the people themselves.*

The people also play at backgammon, [called in Astóri "Pátshis," and "TAKK" in Gilgiti,] with dice [called in Astóri and also in Gilgiti "dall."]

Fighting with iron wristbands is confined to Chilasi women who bring them over their fists which they are said to use with effect.

The people are also fond of wrestling, of butting each other whilst hopping, etc.*

To play the Jew's harp is considered meritorious as King David played it. All other music good Mussulmans are bid to avoid.

The "Sitara" [the Eastern Guitar] used to be much played in Yassen, the people of which country as well as the people of Hunza and Nagyr excel in dancing, singing and playing. After them come the Gilgitis, then the Astoris, Chilasis, Baltis, etc. The people of Nagyr are a comparatively mild race. They carry on goldwashing which is constantly interrupted by kidnapping parties from the opposite Hunza.

* "Powder" is called "Jebati" in Astóri and in Gilgiti "Bilen," and is, in both dialects, also the word used for medicinal powder. It is made of Sulphur, Saltpetre and coal. Sulphur = dantzil. Saltpetre = Shór in Astori, and Shorá in Gilgiti. Coal = Kári. The general proportion of the composition is, as my informant put it, after dividing the whole into six and a half parts to give 5 of Saltpetre, 1 of coal, and ½ of Sulphur. Some put less coal in, but it is generally believed that more than the above proportion of Sulphur would make the powder too explosive.

1: Leitner L-3 (1866-93) 1893? AV3 Dard AV3 Kandia

for many years a slave in Chilás, as Ahmad Shah reports). The Gabriális were converted to Muhammadanism by a saint named *Bábáji*, whose shrine is in Gabriál, and is one of the most frequented places by pilgrims. The Gabriális say that this saint lived six or seven generations ago. Mir Abdulla (who is really of Afghanistan, but now lives in Gabriál,) says that the Gabriális were converted to Islám about 150 years ago. Lately, this religion has made great progress among the people of Kandiá generally. Every little village has a mosque, and in most of the towns there are numerous mosques with schools attached to them, which are generally crowded by students from every caste. In Gabriál, the Mullahs or priests are, for the most part, of the Shín caste, but men of every caste are zealous in giving education to their sons. Their education is limited to Muhammadan law (of the Hanifite school), and Arabian logic and philosophy. Very little attention is paid to Arabic or Persian general literature and caligraphy, that great Oriental art; so little, indeed, that Harifullah and Mir Abdulla, who are scholars of a very high standard, are wholly ignorant of any of the caligraphic forms, and their handwriting is scarcely better than that of the lowest primary class boys in the schools of the Punjab.

The most accomplished scholar in Kandiá is the high priest and chief of Patan, named Hazrat Ali, who is a Shín.

The people generally are peaceful, and have a fair complexion and erect bearing. Their social and moral status has lately been raised very high. Robbery and adultery are almost unknown, and the usual punishment for these crimes is death. Divorce is seldom practised; polygamy is not rare among the rich men (wadán), but is seldom found among the common people.

GOVERNMENT.—Every village or town is governed by a Council of elders, chosen from among every tribe or "taffa." The most influential man among these elders for the time being is considered as the chief of the Council. These elders are either Shíns or Yashkun. No Kamín can be elected an elder, though he may become a Mullá, but a Mulla-kamín also cannot be admitted to the Council.

The reigning Council of Gabriál consists of 12 persons, of whom 9 are Shíns and 3 Yashkuns. Patshé Khán is the present chief of the Council. The post of Chief of the Council is not hereditary, but the wisest and the most influential of the elders is elected to that post. Justice is administered by the Mullahs without the interference of the Council, whose operation is limited to inter-tribal feuds.

CUSTOMS AND MANNERS.—Hockey on horseback, which is called "lughât" in Gabriál, is played on holidays; and the place where they meet for the sport is called "lughât-kárin-jha."

Guns are called "náli" in Gabriál, and are manufactured in the town by blacksmiths.

Dancing is not practised generally, as in the other Shín countries. Only "Doms" dance and sing, as this is their profession; they play on the "surdi" (pipe), rabáb (harp), and shaṇdo (drum).

The "purdá" system, or "veiling" women, is prevalent among the gentry, but it is only lately that the system was introduced into this country.

3: Muhammad G-3 (ca. 1900) 1907 AV3 Dard AV3

of the former would be Shins and those of the latter would be Yeshkuns. This shows that their family system takes the mother into consideration.

The Ronos are said to have come from Rajauri, a district in Kashmir, where they belonged to a ruling family of the district.

The Gujars have recently come to these parts and speak the same dialect as in India.

Besides these, there is another family of the former Muhammadan rulers of the country called "Ré." They originally came from Skardu about three centuries ago, and professed to be the descendants of Alexander the Great. The inhabitants considered them to have been born of a fairy, and this idea leads the people to think that their rulers were of a superior race touching on the divine, and that therefore it was necessary to honour and obey them.

The people live very simply, and their requirements are few. Each one is himself a cultivator, a weaver, a carpenter, etc. Their dress, which they weave from the wool of sheep and ibex, includes the *shuka* (cloak), woollen pantaloons, a woollen shirt and a rolled cap. The women wear loose trousers, a shirt and a cap, with a few silver ornaments and shell brooches. They wear on their feet a kind of leather socks called *pabloo*, made either of ibex skin or of cow hide. For hill journeys they wrap their feet in pieces of goat or ibex skin which they call *thauti*.

The chief amusement of the people is polo, which they play with the utmost zest, and shooting markhor, ibex and oorial with their matchlocks for the sake of meat, skin and wool.

The former language of the people was Sanskrit, but the dialect now spoken is generally called "Shina," though the Chitralis call it "Dangrik." It contains many Sanskrit as well as Persian words.

Such are the tribes to whom the folklore and customs appertain, but they have lived together for such a long period under the Buddhist and Muhammadan rulers that it is now difficult to know which of the ceremonies was originally observed by each separate tribe.

I.*

The Festival of "Shino Bazono."

The advent of spring in the Gilgit country brings with it the quaint festival of "Shino Bazono," which corresponds to the English May-day. It lasts about fifteen days, beginning in the middle of February and ending about the beginning of March. As indicating that the long cold winter is at an end with all its accompanying hardships, and that spring is nigh, bringing with it warmth and life and a renewal of the scanty stock of provisions which has run dangerously low during the past months, the festival is hailed with much rejoicing by the simple Gilgit folk. In order to observe this feast rightly, the people, twelve days before its commencement, put ten seers of wheat into a wooden basin. They fill this up with water and keep the mixture wet for five days, after which they take it out and place it in a small pit dug for the purpose in the ground, over which stones are heaped. The wheat is left in this pit for four days, after which the grain is seen

*[See also p. 119 *footnote*.—Ed.]

796 252 to germinate. It is then taken out, dried and ground in one of the Gilgit water-mills. The flour so made is called *diram*, and of it a sweetmeat is compounded on the first of the month by adding some water, oil of apricots and walnuts to the flour and cooking the whole without the addition of any sugar. This sweetmeat has been tasted by the writer and is called *wailai diram*. It has a sweet flavour in spite of the absence of sugar, the fact being regarded as in a way miraculous. The remaining flour is utilized in making small flat loaves called *diram phiti*. This bread is eaten with raisins and oil. The combination is called *drachu bhat*. The feast is not, however, wholly of a vegetarian nature. In the month of "Nos" (about November) each family kills several sheep, and the meat is dried for future use. A leg and a tail are, however, set apart to be cooked on "Shino Bazono," and are then eaten with the *drachu bhat*.

796 539 The feast, which has been partaken of by all the members of the family together, being over, dancing commences and the following song is sung:—

(1) Aju kal ootá la Drároo aju kal chirring ga ootá.
(2) Goom ái chhani tharega, aju kal chirring ga ootá.
(3) Ghi ái chhani tharega, aju kal chirring ga ootá.
(4) Mos ái chhani tharega, aju kal chirring ga ootá.
(5) Mon ái sarai tharega aju kal chirring ga ootá.
(6) Ash to sho dez ik alo aju kal chirring ga ootá.

Translation:—

(1) May this year come again, oh Brethren, may such a year come again!
(2) We will have our stores filled with wheat, may such a year come again!
(3) Much *ghi* will be produced, may the next year be such a one!
(4) Quantities of meat will be stored, may the next year be such a one!
(5) Our vessels will be filled with wine, may such a year appear again!
(6) A blessed day has come to-day, may such a year appear again!

796 526 [563] At noon all the fighting men assemble and make preparations for polo, while the women ascend to the roofs of the houses on each side of the road along which the procession to the polo-ground will pass. In their hands are long slender sticks, with which, as the procession passes, they belabour their heroes unmercifully. Koliwals are specially made the victims of this castigation. They are the trading community of the country, and the opportunity of paying off old scores is one not to be lost. An unpopular general dealer may consider himself fortunate if he escapes from the hands of these viragos with the payment of a forfeit of gold dust. Next comes the turn of the Rá or chief, who runs the gauntlet mounted. Galloping through, he salams with both hands to the women on either side, but even he is not allowed to pass without the bestowal of liberal largess on his fair subjects. It must be admitted that the ladies generally let him off lightly, for which no doubt they have their reasons. Possibly their position at court depends on it. On the arrival of the procession at the polo-ground, a goat is killed on one of the goal-stones. This sacrifice is called "Bazono-ai-Karai." The goat's head having been cut off, a rope is attached to it; the players then touch the head with their polo-sticks. After this a *doom* or drum-beater sets off at a run holding the end of the cord, to which the goat's head is attached behind. After him rides the raja or *trangfa* of the village, who strikes the head

3: Muhammad G-3 (ca. 1900) 1907 AV3 Dard AV3

repeatedly with his stick till they reach the opposite goal. This ends this part of the festival. Polo then begins, and, as is the fashion in these parts, is continued without intermission till the evening of the great day.

The "Ayi Boyi" Ceremony.

Ayi Boyi is the name of a Gilgiti month falling next to "Shino Bozino." The day fixed for performing the ceremony was publicly announced by the Rá throughout the village. All the boys and young men of the village assembled in the afternoon at a place just below the Rá's dwelling. The Rá used to sit on the roof of the house surrounded by his private servants, and a heap of walnuts was laid before him, while his followers laid a heap of ashes near them. The Rá then threw all the walnuts among the people below, who scrambled for them. While they were thus employed a heavy shower of ashes was hurled down by the Rá's servants upon them. In the merriment which followed, the people would rush towards the Rá, endeavouring to seize him or his servants, if they were strong enough to do so; while if they proved to be the weaker, the chief's followers would turn the tables against them. Should the chief himself or any of his suit fall into their hands, he was only released on the payment of a suitable forfeit; but, should the struggle result in the favour of the chief and his party, the prisoners made from among the people were released after a few days' captivity.

II.

The Ceremony of "Ganoni."

The inhabitants of these parts are strictly prohibited from tasting any new crop before accomplishing the "Ganoni" ceremony, which is celebrated in the middle of June, when the wheat and barley are ripe. The Rajah or headman of the village fixes and proclaims throughout his district the days for the performance of this ceremony, which is carried out in the following manner. On the afternoon of the day fixed the people set out to their fields with loaves fried in butter, which are greedily eaten at a corner of the field by all the members of the family. After this they cut some ears of barley, bring them to their homes, and keep them for a while on a fire. These husked and roasted grains are now put in a small basin filled with milk or curds. Of this milk every member of the family takes three wooden spoons full. Then national dances and vainglorious songs continue till late in the night.

The Duma Nikha Ceremony.

When the people have finished the labour of reaping and winnowing their spring and autumn crops, and have put the grain into bags to carry to their homes, they recite the following prayer:—

(1) Bismillah ya Khudaya Barakat deh.
(2) Oosum, Doosum ai Barakat deh.
(3) Kharki jawán ai Barakat deh.

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(4) Katawāl, Batawāl ai Barakat deh.
(5) Gilit Malik ai Barakat deh.
(6) Sharo ai Rat ai lo bu sing Barakat deh.
(7) Owal ai sur ai Barakat deh.
(8) Jakun ai shing nikheh sang Barakat deh.
(9) Gogo ai dayin o sang Barakat deh.

Translation :—

(1) In thy name, O merciful Lord, give us abundance!
(2) Give us abundance like Oosum and Doosum (remarkable men of ancient times)!
(3) Give us abundance like the brave Kharki (Kharki, the people say, was 4½ yards tall)!
(4) Give us abundance like Katawall and Batawall (also ancient heroes)!
(5) Give us prosperity like Malik, the Raja of Gilgit!
(6) Give us abundance, so that we may carry our grain home throughout the long night of autumn till it is dawn!
(7) Give us abundance like the long day of summer!
(8) Give us abundance till horns grow out of the ass!
(9) Give us abundance till a beard grows from the rocks!

● [526] After gathering their crops the inhabitants celebrate a festival called "Duma Nikha," an expression of their feeling of freedom from all agricultural labour, and indulge in recreations and games, the chief of which is polo. A goat is killed and roasted and the meat eaten at the place where they perform their dances, which continue late into the night. They also add to their enjoyment by shooting at a mark, after which the assembly breaks up.

III.

Marriage.

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When a boy reaches 16 or 17 years of age, his parents begin to search for a wife for him, and as soon as they hear of a likely girl, they summon the headmen of their own village, to whom they give food, and request them to ask such and such a person to give his daughter in marriage. The headmen carry this message to the father of the girl, who entertains them for one or two days. During this time he summons his relatives and the headmen of his own village, in order to consult them in the matter. In the case of consent being given, a prayer is read by both the parties as sealing the promise. The boy's father now presents the following things to the girl's father in token of their new relationship :—

Cloth	...	5 yards.
Needle	...	1
Knife	...	1
Rope	...	1

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000 and have at all times borne a high reputation for bravery. In
648 former days, Chilas, with the neighbouring valleys of Darel and Gor, owed allegiance to Gilgit, but the Chilasis were notorious for the way in which they tyrannised over the whole surrounding country, making frequent raids, plundering and carrying off men, women, and children into slavery. The Cashmere, Kishengunga, Astor, and Gilgit Valleys were frequently laid under contribution, and they boast of having once plundered Iskardo. During the Sikh occupation of Cashmere, an expedition was sent against Chilas, but sustained a disastrous defeat. Permission was granted by the British Government, in 1851, to the Maharajah Golab Sing to exact reprisals for a successful raid, and two columns entered Chilas,—one from Cashmere by the Lolab Valley, and one from Astor by the Mazenoo Pass. The Chilas fort was taken, and the Chilasis made submission, agreeing to pay a yearly tribute of a hundred goats and five tolas of gold, and engaging that the fort of Chilas should not
[712] be re-built. Takk is now the only fortified place in Chilas. Since then Chilas has given no trouble to the Cashmere Government. Three hostages reside in Cashmere, and are changed yearly. Cashmere officials do not, however, visit the country, and any attempt to exercise authority would probably be resisted.

533 The love of music, dancing, and polo, which are so marked
535 among all the neighbouring communities, are unknown in
526 Chilas; and ponies, which are common enough elsewhere, are scarce.

361 The country is bare and treeless. The village of Chilas is
[133] situated about half a mile from the Indus, on a plain three miles in length, and from a mile to a mile and a half in breadth, sloping gently down to the river. Booner, though a dependency of Chilas, has paid a separate tribute to Cashmere of twelve
173 goats and three tolas of gold since 1842. The Chilasis relate that in former times a Hindoo Rajah, named Chachai, ruled in Chilas over the whole of Shinkari, but that, dying childless, his country became divided into republican communities, as at present. In later days a disastrous civil war broke out in the community between two brothers, Bôt and Matchuk, which ended in the defeat and expulsion of all the partizans of the latter. The Bôte are now the most prosperous family in Chilas.[1] Tradition still preserves the name of Naron, a

[1] This is perhaps the origin of the name "Bôte," applied indiscriminately to all Dards by Cashmere officials.

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D 454 before he has had time to confide the secret of their hiding place to his son. The practice is entirely confined to the Shins, who have many legends of lost treasures which have fallen under the guardianship of demons.

D 234 251 556 In both Chilas and Darel, a practice exists of storing clarified butter in cellars for a great number of years. It turns deep red and keeps for more than a hundred years, when it is much prized. A tree is sometimes planted over the cellar to ensure its not being disturbed, and wealth is computed by the amount of butter stored up. On one occasion a deputation came to me from Darel to ask that some run-away slaves should be compelled to say where they had buried their master's butter, as they alone knew the secret.

D 273 B 273 Wine, which at one time was universally drunk, is also placed in flagged underground cellars to ripen in large earthen jars, but is never kept more than a year. In digging the foundations of my house at Gilgit, I came on one of these old cellars with two large jars in it, which had evidently been undisturbed for many years. The drinking of wine has much diminished under Islam, and where still practised is concealed as much as possible, except in Hunza and Ponyal, where public jollifications are not uncommon. The Maulai sect make no secret of the practice, and on my visit to Hunza, in 1876, a bottle of Scotch whiskey made Ghazan Khan so gloriously drunk that all Hunza spoke of it with admiration.

D 526 Polo-playing, of which so complete an account has been given by Mr. Drew, is the national game. Dardistan play, however, lacks the neatness of the Munnipoori game; but what is wanting in style is quite made up in enthusiasm, old men joining in the game as long as they are able to sit on a horse. Matches are generally played for some small stake, and the conquerors exact all the rights of victory by taunting their beaten opponents. In Chitral the game, which is called "ghal," is played somewhat differently from the way described by Mr. Drew. Aman-ool-mulk, the present ruler of Chitral, was said to be the best player in the country when a young man.

000 The game is quite unknown in Badakhshan, where "buzkushi," or "goat-snatching," is the favourite amusement. The following description of this game as played by the Kirghiz is given by Shaw,[1] under the name of "Ooghlak:—"

"The headless body of a goat is thrown on the ground, and every one tries to pick it up without leaving the saddle. The press is tremen-

[1] Shaw's High Tartary, Yarkund and Kashgar.

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dous, as, with one foot and one hand on the saddle, they stretch down the other hand to the ground. Presently one succeeds, and is off, swinging himself back into the saddle as he goes. He is chased by the rest, doubling and turning to avoid them. At last, another and another gets a hold of the goat. The first man throws his leg over the body to tighten his hold, and away they go across country till their horses diverge, and all but one lose their grasp. He is again caught, but throws the goat on the opposite side. The others wrestle with him as they gallop three or four abreast, the outermost riders almost leaving their horses as they stretch their whole bodies across their neighbours."

A similar amusement is described by Vambéry[1] as one of the marriage ceremonies of the Turkomans, called by them Kokbûri (green wolf). In this the bride carries on her lap the carcase of a lamb or goat, and setting off at full gallop, is pursued by the bridegroom and other young men of the party, also on horseback.

Firing at a mark from horseback is another favourite pastime. The mark is a gourd filled with ashes, or a small ball, hung from a pole about 30 feet high. The marksmen gallop at full speed and fire as they pass underneath. Every successful shot is marked by a shower of ashes, and they do not desist till every particle of the gourd is shot away. Considering the clumsiness of the weapons used, the shooting is sometimes remarkably good.

As polo is the national game, so dancing is the national amusement, and no description of these people would be complete without mention of it. Feast-days, births, weddings, any occasion of a gathering, serves as an excuse for dancing, and the end of a game of polo is always signalised by a dance on the Shawaran. The spectators form a ring, inside which the musicians are seated, opposite the principal personage present. The instruments tune up, and a murmur goes round the circle as to who will dance. Soon a name is called out, or a volunteer steps into the ring, and, with a word to the band, commences. Several different steps are in vogue, each of which has its special air, the Dunni, Soz, Balôs (Iskardo), Tuppnutt, Tajwer (Badakhshan or Tajik), Sirikoli, and Cashmeri. Almost all of these commence slowly, increasing in pace till the performer is bounding round the circle at top speed. As soon as one is tired, fresh dancers are always ready to come forward, and hours are often passed without either performers or spectators seeming to weary. The dancing is sometimes really graceful and interesting to watch, and forms a great contrast to the terrible monotony of an

[1] Vambery's Travels in Central Asia.

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backs bent, feet tired and stumbling, just staggering on for days, with eyes on the ground, perhaps fixed on the heels of the man ahead, their loads only lightened by that which they ate of it—leaving less for the journey back; the man who fell was hardly noticed by those who were with him unless he happened to be a relation.

Gilgit, together with Astor, Bunji, Chilas, Hunza, and a few other places is often referred to as Dardistan. Gilgit is the most important place, being nearest the frontier; a British Political Agency was stationed here. The town of Gilgit is the only town of any importance; it has been built on the Gilgit river at a place which is some miles above where that river joins the Indus, and at a height almost the same as Srinagar.

Much of the Gilgit valley is well cultivated, with fruit trees; in the fields wheat and barley are grown; in those which are available to water, fairly good crops of rice, but where cultivation has not been attempted, the land is barren, though some of the hillsides carry large woods of fir and juniper, and higher still there is birch.

The country is hard, bleak and inhospitable—the sort of place one immediately associates with the word "out-post"; one can imagine the disappointment, if not horror, of a married British officer on learning that he had been posted to that garrison, but it was not so for the single man to whom the great attraction was the shooting and the polo. Like all towns and large villages in the mountains, Gilgit has an excellent polo ground which is still used although the British have gone, for the men of the country excel in horsemanship and polo is their national game.

Just as the valley of Kashmir is the home of the fairy tales, so also are the Gilgiti legends famous for those parts; fortunately a great number of them have been preserved for all time by Britishers who have served there. Many of them are fables, others doubtless have a certain amount of truth in them; they contain the history of that part; in them can be seen the character of the men of Gilgit as they have always been, cruel, hard and fearless, and of their womenfolk, lacking nothing in courage and cruelty.

One story so told will never be lost to the people; there is

Te Gerris T-S (pre-Gaze) 1964 AVI Kashmir
Dard ms

One story is told well worth repeating here. It is a fairy tale that is in authentic history and concerns Trakhan, one of the most famous of all the Ras of Gilgit. Here it is.

Many years ago there was a dashing young Ra of Gilgit who married the only daughter of a good family of Dard. They lived happily together, and as Queen Soni also was very much loved by the people, being beautiful and kind. She bore the Ra one daughter. The Ra was admired by all, as was to be expected of him he was the superior of all his subjects in horsemanship and "the manly sports"; his physique surpassed that of all his men. His one great passion was polo, and during each of the months of the year when the pass was open, he used to take a team of Gilgit men over to Dard to play against a team which consisted of the seven brothers of his Queen. The play was always fairly even, each winning side receiving from the losers some prize; at first it was a few goats, then fine clothes, next the horses they had ridden, and gradually, as the years passed, the games became keener with jewels, land and slaves as the stakes, until finally the two teams staked their own lives, the losers to forfeit them to the wish of the winners.

One can imagine the polo played on that fateful day. The finest polo ponies were brought out, each side determined to win—being Gilgit men the thought of what would happen were they to lose, never entered their heads. The play ran even, five all, six all, seven all, then the men of Dard scored the eighth goal, they had but one more to win the game. The shouts of those who crowded and crushed round the ground roared, as did the blowing of the bands as this dramatic hour drew near; only the sound of thundering hoofs, of the crack of the polo sticks striking the hard sunburnt-wood ball, the yell of a player as he shouted to another of his side. Then the Ra of Gilgit struck the ball, it hit the stone wall and bounced, he caught it in his hand, and as polo is played there, tore away with it through the goal. The game was now eight all, and the Ra was to take the "ruk" —a more or less free shot, he, by the rules of the game, riding half way down the field, throwing the ball in the air, and striking it as it fell. The Ra's own band started to play crazily with excitement, his few supporters cheered until their throats closed dry. With the Dard players on either side of him, he threw the ball, struck it, and as it flew towards the goal, with

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539 cruel spurs and whip, all spod after it. It fell short of the goal, but
524 the Ra's mount was famous throughout the land, he was there
first, the ball was through the goal, then as with their last gasp
they tried to pick up the ball and so make bad the goal, he was
again there first, and the fatal ninth goal was scored against
the men of Darel.

539 Of such are the men of those parts, that the Ra in the flush of victory immediately demanded the penalty from the losers; it was his right, none could deny that. But he could not take as slaves to his castle the brothers of his Queen, he could not sell into bondage men of such quality and breeding, and so, with no consideration for the superb game that they had given him on that and many previous occasions, with no thought to his robbing himself of further games, he had all seven of the Queen's brothers beheaded on the polo field. Terrible though it was, the men of Darel who had come to watch, and outnumbered by hundreds those few men of Gilgit, considering it fair, allowed the team from Gilgit, together with its supporters to return untouched, whilst they buried their dead.

A messenger with fleet feet raced ahead with the news so that when the champions arrived home they were received with songs of victory, dancing and feasting. Only one among those that waited did not rejoice, that was Queen Soni; she had dearly loved her brothers who had adored her always. In that night of Gilgit's rejoicing her love for the Ra turned to bitter hate; then the blood of the hills rose in her and she became determined to avenge them. It was easy for a woman to put an end to her man, and the next day the green vegetables in the Ra's evening meal contained some poisonous herb, so that with the dawn he did not awaken. Her only regret was that she had not dared feed him a poison which would have caused his last hours to be a writhing agony, but had she done so, he might have guessed that it was she who was responsible, and in his death throes have ordered her an execution the same as her brothers had suffered, or even one like that of all the old and useless people of Gilgit in those days, they being carried in a basket to the top of a hill and cast over the precipice.

Even then her hatred, which had overcome grief was not complete; it remained within her, and when her son was born

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Astor

643 given to him by the Durbar, treated with contempt by the Kashmiri Governor of Gilgit, under whom is the valley of Astor, he had the loyalty and respect of his former subjects, who reserved for their Kashmiri rulers the hatred, fear, and contempt begotten of oppression.

• 521 We saw at Astor for the first time polo as it is played in what is either the home of its birth or the land of its earliest adoption. In very few places does flat open ground exist; consequently the polo grounds are merely terraces annexed from the cultivation, through which, as a rule, the main road into the village runs. The Astor ground is about a hundred and fifty yards long by twenty yards wide, and it is one of the best. Any number of men play, the usual limit is ten-a-side, and at the beginning of the game both sides assemble at one of the goals. When all is ready the captain of one side, usually the local raja or the most important guest, dashes down the ground at full speed, carrying the ball and followed by the whole mob of players, all shouting madly; the band, which is seated outside the boundary wall at the centre of the ground, plays its loudest, the lookers-on yell and whistle in a way a London street boy might be proud of, and, without checking his speed for a moment, the holder of the ball throws it into the air and hits it as it falls. The hit should be made from the centre of the ground, and a good man will often hit a goal. A man who is inclined to be a bit too sharp will gallop well beyond the centre before hitting, and gain an unfair advantage. One of my worst enemies, who murdered his brother because he was a friend of ours, who gave me endless trouble, and

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Dard AV3
Astor

finally made war on us, but on whom the hand of Fate at last descended with crushing power, always cheated in this way. I used to think it was very typical of his brutal, overbearing, treacherous nature. 526

The game is very rough and ready, and each goal hit produces a wild *mêlée*, as the striker or his side must be able to pick up the ball for the goal to count. The man who has hit the goal will throw himself off his pony and try and pick up the ball, while the other side, with fine impartiality, hit him or the ball, or ride over him, in their endeavours to save the goal. Why each game does not end in sudden death and a general free fight I could never imagine, but a serious accident is rare. In most parts the losing side has to dance before the winners when the game is over. As all the men love dancing, this is no great hardship. With the advent of the British Subaltern the polo rules of the Hindu-Kush have undergone revision and improvement. [177]

A day at Astor enabled us to rest our camp and attend to letters. Then we started again, double marching ourselves to Doian, the last stage before the descent into the Indus valley is made, where I proposed to shoot for a few days in the Lechur, one of the nullahs leading into the Indus, and good for markhor. Our camp was to go on by single marches to Bunji, where the Indus is crossed. 361

The character of the mountains now began to change completely. Below eight thousand feet hardly a tree is to be seen, except where irrigation fertilises the lands of a village. Steep bare hill-sides, streaked with reds and ochres, but generally 133 137

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir

Dard AV3

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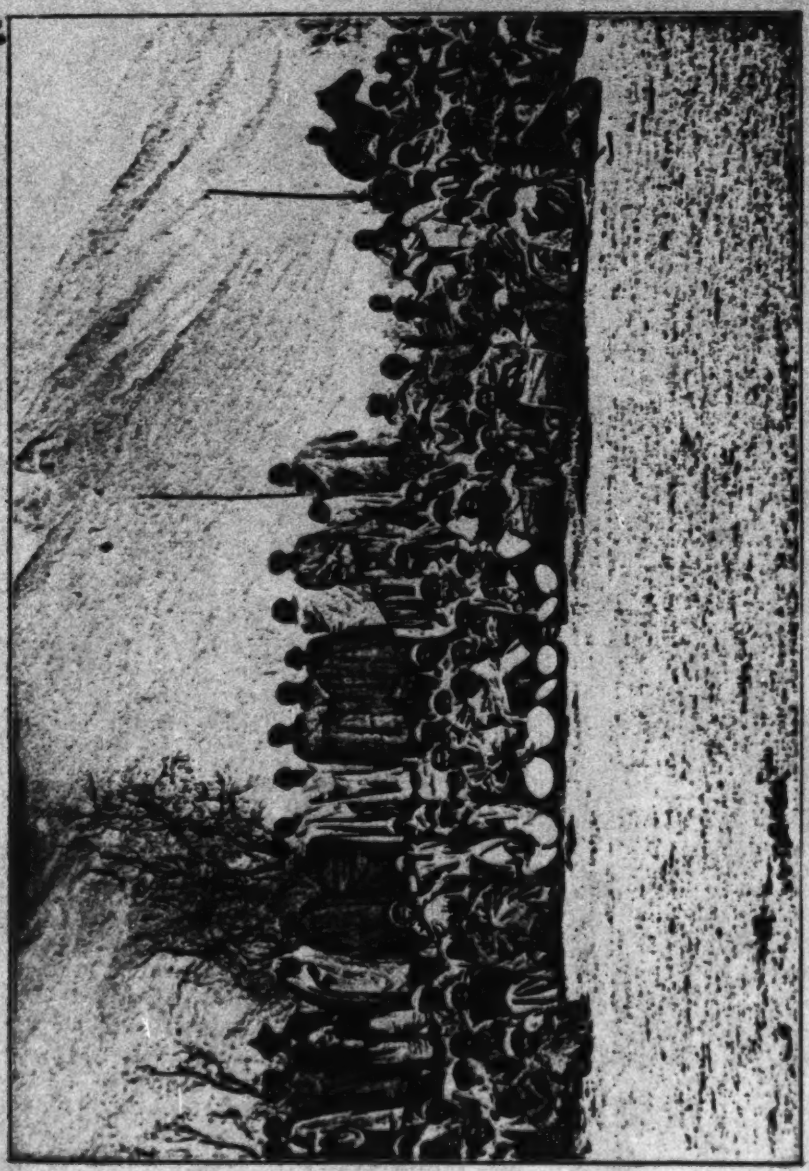

THE GILGIT BAND AND CROWD WATCHING POLO.

[facing p. 40]